

Local officials begin to analyze CalFed plan

◆ Sweeping proposal for water, ecosystem is too complex for many

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WOODLAND — Just two days after the opening of a 75-day comment period on the draft environmental document for the CalFed Bay-Delta Program, local politicians are working to get educated.

A joint project by the federal and state governments, CalFed is an attempt to improve the state's water supply and ecosystem.

Roughly 25 people attended a joint meeting Wednesday of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors and the Woodland City Council. They came to learn a little bit more about this huge and complex proposal.

The project is so large, in

fact, that Forrest Sprague, aide to state Sen. Maurice Johannessen, R-Redding, said he'd calculated that to get through all the materials it will require 42 1/2 pages of reading per day before the June 1 comment period deadline.

According to Sprague, under a "worst-case scenario," 300,000 acres of farm land could be lost as a result of the proposal. That's a \$510 million per year loss in agricultural production, he said.

Elly Fairclough, aide to Assemblywoman Helen Thomson, D-Davis, urged everyone to stay engaged in the process.

"The worst thing would be to disengage or to walk away from the table," Fairclough said. "So, hang in there."

Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Lynnel Pollock agreed that not staying involved could

only mean negative results for Yolo County.

The draft document released Monday represents years of effort that commenced after the signing of the Bay-Delta Accord in 1994, which was meant to provide a reprieve from ongoing water disputes.

The document aims to address the over-use of water from the Delta—the lifeblood of California's ecology and economy.

The idea, officials say, is to "fix" the Delta. Gov. Pete Wilson's initial direction was to say, "all options are on the table."

Stein Buer, CalFed's program director for storage and conveyance, said the fate of the Bay-Delta region affects the state's economy and ecosystem as a whole. The Delta and its tributaries provide water for 22 of the state's 32 million residents.

Ongoing concerns about the Delta include water quality, water supply reliability and levee stability.

The EIR outlines three alternative solutions, each of which has six common program elements: levee system integrity, water use efficiency, ecosystem restoration, watershed management, water transfers and water quality. Storage and conveyance components, however, may differ from alternative to alternative, Buer said.

"Ecosystem restoration really is the centerpiece of our proposal," he said, adding that never before has it played such a cen-

tral role in any water system planning.

The county's water consultant, Fran Borcalli of Borcalli and Associates, admitted that like many people, he doesn't understand CalFed, either.

"I don't pretend to know much about CalFed," he said. "I haven't tried to follow it. We can't afford to follow it."

With regard to conveyance and storage, Borcalli said two proposals could benefit Yolo County. Those are the extension of the Tehama-Colusa Canal and a diversion from the Sacramento River.

He also cautioned board and council members to keep an eye out for a Blue Ridge storage proposal mentioned in another plan, the Department of Water Resources' California Water Plan Update, which he said is "not a good project." Comments are due on that plan by March 31.

Supervisors Mike McGowan and Tom Stallard said their big fear—and what they will not do—is sign on to a plan that puts more water into the Delta, sending it to urban water users in the south

state, without guaranteeing storage and dams necessary to replace water that is taken away.

Buer said some of the potential storage sites for creating new water sources include the extension of the Tehama-Colusa Canal, the enlargement of Lake Berryessa and the enlargement of Lake Shasta.

"Our ground water is our savings account," Stallard said. "We must be assured it's not going to go somewhere else."

But Buer said the plan indicates solutions must include assurances to local jurisdictions. "Your concerns are legitimate and realistic," he said.

Supervisor Dave Rosenberg also expressed concern over this complex subject.

"I think that it may be by design that ... no member of the public can understand this. Shame on you for doing that," he said. "I would suggest that we need to get our staff and our consultants to work in a real effort to get some thorough analysis."

For more information about CalFed, call 700-5752.